

St Michael's CofE Primary School, Great Lever

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105214
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	336451
Inspection dates	27–28 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Geoffrey Yates

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	340
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Brockie
Headteacher	Mrs Alison Hart
Date of previous school inspection	12 February 2007
School address	Green Lane Bolton Lancashire BL3 2PL
Telephone number	01204 333063
Fax number	01204 333064
Email address	office@st-michaels.bolton.sch.uk

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	27–28 April 2010
Inspection number	336451

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Seventeen lessons were visited, taught by 13 teachers. Meetings were held with pupils, the headteacher, the senior leadership team, teachers and representatives of the governing body. The inspectors looked at a wide range of documents and samples of the pupils' work. Questionnaire responses from pupils, staff and 58 parents were analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at:

- how well pupils were making progress, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- how well assessment information is used in ensuring that pupils make good progress
- the strength of provision for vulnerable pupils
- the quality of school leadership with regard to the steps taken to address issues from the previous inspection.

Information about the school

This is a larger-than-average primary school. Most pupils come from Asian backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from other ethnic groups varies and there are frequently pupils who are newly arrived from abroad. The majority of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has increased and is now larger than in many schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The school has achieved many awards including, more recently, the Artsmark. A major building project was taking place at the time of the inspection.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Michael's provides a good education for its pupils. The school has strengths in many areas including leadership and management and in the good quality of its care, guidance and support. Parents think highly of the school. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion, for example, in the way in which it successfully enables pupils from different ethnic backgrounds to work and play well together. Support for the most vulnerable pupils is at the heart of the school's ethos. Pupils' learning and progress is good because of good teaching overall and by pupils' involvement in assessing their learning.

The majority of children start school with skills well below those typical for their age, especially in aspects of language and literacy. They make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Across the rest of the school they make good progress and all groups of pupils achieve well. By the time pupils leave, they reach average standards. Systems for tracking pupils' progress are efficient and provide an accurate picture of individual pupils' progress.

The quality of teaching and learning are good overall, but there are examples of satisfactory teaching that slow the progress pupils make in a minority of lessons. Strong features common to good lessons include a fast pace, good use made of support staff, well planned activities and pupils' good behaviour. Where teaching is sometimes not as strong, lessons are not matched to pupils' needs and questioning is not used well to probe pupils' understanding. The curriculum has a clear focus on developing pupils' basic skills but does not provide enough opportunities for these skills to be used well in other areas of the curriculum. As such, the work in other curriculum areas does not always match the quality found in English and mathematics.

Since the last inspection, standards have risen and information about pupils' progress is used more effectively to ensure that pupils make sustained progress. This track record of improvement illustrates well the ambition and drive the headteacher provides together with the support of senior leaders. Owing to its rigorous and accurate self-evaluation, the school is aware of its strengths and areas for development and plans carefully to address these issues. There is a strong commitment to develop the staff's skills through focused training. This illustrates well the school's good capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on current good practice to ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently good throughout the school, by:

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

- ensuring in all classes that work is matched well to pupils' needs
- ensuring that questioning is used effectively.
- Improve the curriculum by extending opportunities for pupils to use their skills in literacy and numeracy when studying other subjects.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils are attentive and work hard; they learn well and make good progress. Pupils' enjoyment of learning and their knowledge of what they need to do to improve are key factors in their good outcomes. As they move up through the school, increasing proportions of pupils achieve the expected attainment levels for their age from a start well below that found in most schools. In the current Year 6, many pupils have made more progress than is normally expected across Key Stage 2. This means they are on track to meet what were originally challenging end-of-year targets set for them, and many may exceed them.

All groups of pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. These include the pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, whose good progress owes much to the high quality of support from teaching assistants. Teaching assistants who work with those pupils for whom English is an additional language have made them equally effective and these pupils also make good progress.

Pupils show a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, including the importance of exercise and diet. They take advantage of plenty of opportunities for physical activity. Pupils are very caring and get on well with each other. They embrace opportunities to take responsibility by assuming a number of important roles. These roles include being members of the school council and working as 'buddies', when older pupils help younger ones to play actively together. The school council takes on an important role in the life of the school, suggesting areas for improvements. Pupils have a good understanding of other cultures and faith groups.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate	
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good overall. Members of staff have a clear understanding of what needs to be done if pupils are not making the progress they are capable of making. This is because the tracking system is of a good quality with the information used well. Teachers show good subject knowledge; relationships are strong and promote the good behaviour seen in lessons. In the best lessons, pupils are really challenged to use their skills well. For example, in one lesson pupils confidently used their skills in writing to produce persuasive letters that try to convince the school bursar to loan some money to fund mini-enterprise initiatives.

Children are grouped by ability in intensive short, sharp daily 'word building sessions' and this leadership initiative is highly successful in boosting pupils' skills. Good use is made of visiting staff to support the work done in class. Teaching assistants are well deployed. Pupils who are at an early stage of speaking English as an additional language receive effective support, being integrated well into the school community, through expert help. While most teaching is good, there is some variation across the school. Where teaching is less than good, learning is not planned as well and not focused sufficiently on developing pupils' skills. In these classes, opportunities are missed to use questioning well to probe pupils' understanding.

The curriculum takes full account of the diverse backgrounds of the pupils and promotes a good understanding of faiths and cultures. It is supported by a wide range of clubs and activities, such as music and dance, taught by visiting specialists. The curriculum has a strong focus on the development of basic literacy, numeracy. However, not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to use their basic skills effectively in other areas of the curriculum.

Good quality pastoral care, guidance and support impacts well on pupils' personal development. The needs of vulnerable pupils are fully met and there is well planned extra help and support for those pupils who are newly arrived in this country. The school works very closely with families. It uses a wide range of strategies to encourage attendance and has been successful in reducing absenteeism. A major strength is the way in which all members of staff ensure pupils' good behaviour through consistent application of its effective system of rewards and sanctions.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, together with the strong support of the deputy headteacher and senior staff, provides the school with the clear direction, drive, ambition and enthusiasm that has led to marked improvements since the previous inspection. For example, assessment systems have been improved and the information used well to improve pupils' progress. Pupils' behaviour has improved from satisfactory to good. The headteacher has also established good systems and approaches to make sure that the school continues to improve. The school has a strong ethos that promotes equality of opportunity that places every pupil at the heart of its work. The work carried out to support inclusion has played a major role in bringing this vision to fruition by successfully helping pupils to overcome their barriers to learning. For example, the high numbers of new pupils from abroad have the support of a 'pupil buddy', and these buddies say that their role is, 'to make sure they have no worries!'

The governors are well informed and receive detailed information about the school's performance, which they use to evaluate the impact of their policies. They work with the headteacher to identify priorities for improvement which are set out very clearly in the school development plan. Teaching and learning are well led and managed. There are good links with parents and carers, who appreciate the approachability of staff, with some members of staff able to talk to parents of Asian origin in their mother tongue. The school makes the most of the church and other local community links. There are strong links with other schools.

Arrangements to make sure that pupils are as safe as possible follow recommended good practice. The potential hazards of a building project taking place while pupils' are on site have been addressed by the school appointing temporary staff to ensure that pupils are safe. Provision for community cohesion is good and the school has a clear procedure to evaluate its provision. Its ethos and the importance placed on religious education result in the pupils having great respect for each other, a detailed knowledge of a range of world faiths and a very cohesive school community.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes, and achieve well from levels well below those expected for their age. This is because staff know the children well and provide effective care and support. The partnership with parents and carers is good, for example, weekly newsletters are provided and 'stay and play' sessions are effective. The above-average number of children who are at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language receive strong support. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified early and their needs are met extremely well. As a result of the high expectations of the staff, children settle quickly and their personal and social skills are developed well. Progress is good, but most children do not meet the goals expected of their age by the end of their Reception Year. The focus on improving children's knowledge of linking letters and sounds has been successful. Children become increasingly independent, choosing activities indoors and outdoors and taking part in investigations but the focus on this aspect of provision is not consistent across the classes. Provision is led and managed well with every opportunity taken to minimize the impact of reduced resources because of the building project taking place. Teamwork is good and staff work with common purpose to challenge children successfully so they make good progress.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The school has recently undertaken its own survey of parents and carers views and these are included in this analysis. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are supportive of the school, and say that their children are safe. Parents and carers feel welcome in school, especially if they have any worries or concerns, and many endorse the views of a number of parents that, 'we are very happy to have my child in this school.' A few parents and carers had concerns about their children's progress or whether the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. The inspection finds that pupils make good progress and achieve well and that pupils' behaviour is good. Good procedures are in place to manage any unacceptable behaviour well.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Michael's CofE Primary School, Great Lever to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 58 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 340 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	45	78	12	21	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	40	69	18	31	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	36	62	17	29	2	3	2	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	59	20	34	1	2	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	37	64	19	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	47	26	45	1	2	3	5
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	32	55	26	45	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	29	50	20	34	2	3	3	5
The school meets my child's particular needs	31	53	22	38	2	3	3	5
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	50	19	33	5	9	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	53	21	36	3	5	3	5
The school is led and managed effectively	31	53	23	40	2	3	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	59	20	34	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



29 April 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's CofE Primary School, Great Lever, Bolton, BL3 2PL

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team to your school for its recent inspection. We all enjoyed talking with you and were very impressed by your politeness. You have a good knowledge and understanding of how to stay safe and you make a good contribution to the school and the wider community. Very well done! We have judged your behaviour to be good.

You attend a good school. Your school is led and managed well and I am sure you are all looking forward to using the extra space the building extension will provide when it is finished. All the adults play their part in the smooth running of the school and want the best for you. Your headteacher, the teachers and all the other adults give you good help and support and the governors keep a close eye on the school. Through the hard work of the adults the school provides you with good care, guidance and support, and good teaching. The subjects you learn are interesting too and it is good to hear about your involvement in the school council, as buddies and about the fundraising for so many good causes. We know you enjoy these activities, along with your dinner time and after-school clubs, visits and the many visitors.

So what does the school need to do to get even better? We have asked your headteacher and other leaders to make sure that all the teaching is good. In addition, we have asked them, to plan the work they want you to do in all the different subjects so that you have plenty of opportunities to use your skills in literacy and numeracy.

Congratulations to you all.

Yours sincerely

Mr Geoffrey Yates

Lead Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.